ART BY ICHIHA AKIZUKI
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CHAPTER 11
THE CONNOISSEUR'S PHILOSOPHY (PART 2)

TH-THIS IS THE OWNER'S HOUSE?!

IT LOOKS LIKE AN ART MUSEUM!

IT ORIGINALLY BELONGED TO MY GRANDFATHER'S UNCLE, WHO WAS HIS APPRAISAL INSTRUCTOR.

HE BUILT IT TO SHOWCASE HIS COLLECTION TO VISITORS.

MY GRANDFATHER CLAIMS HE PUT HIS HEART AND SOUL INTO SURPASSING HIS MANY RIVALS.

IN OTHER WORDS, THIS MANSION IS...

...TO THE MOST SUITABLE HEIR AMONG HIS STUDENTS AND RELATIVES.

AND HE APPARENTLY DECLARED THAT HE WOULD LEAVE THE MANSION...

THIS UNCLE DIDN'T HAVE ANY CHILDREN.

IT'S PROOF OF THE OWNER'S VICTORY.

WELCOME HOME, KIYOTAKA.

YOSHIE-SAN.

WOW...

IT'S OKAY TO WEAR YOUR SHOES ON THE FIRST FLOOR.

WOW, SHE'S BEAUTIFUL...

Who is she?

OH, WOULD YOU BE AOI-CHAN?

I'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT YOU!

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO START GETTING READY.

IT'S SO NICE TO FINALLY GET TO MEET YOU! I'M TAKIYAMA YOSHIE.

A PLEASURE.

I-IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU, TOO. I'M MASHIRO AOI.

YOSHIE-SAN IS GRANDFATHER'S GIRLFRIEND.

G-GIRL-FRIEND?!

Y-YES...

I WAS PLANNING ON IT, BUT...

Is that weird?

BUT IT'S ON AGAIN, OFF AGAIN WITH US... SOMETIMES IT FEELS LIKE A CRUEL TRICK OF FATE.

THAT'S HOW I MET SEIJI-SAN.

I WAS HIRED AS A CONSULTANT FOR A MUSEUM EVENT.

HUH?

ANYWAY, AOI-CHAN, IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE WEARING TO THE PARTY?

ALL RIGHT. I'LL LEAVE AOI-SAN TO YOU, THEN.

You should go get ready, too!

KIYO-TAKA,

I'M GOING TO BORROW AOI-CHAN FOR A MINUTE.

HUH?!

DRESS UP?

YOU REALLY DO LOOK CUTE IN WHAT YOU HAVE ON...

BUT FOR TODAY, LET'S DRESS YOU UP A LITTLE BIT MORE.

SORRY TO DRAG YOU ALONG LIKE THAT.

I-IT'S THAT KIND OF PARTY?!

AND HE'LL BE CHANGING INTO A KIMONO FOR THE RECEPTION.

SEIJI-SAN HAD A SUIT CUSTOM MADE FOR TODAY.

I THOUGHT THIS MIGHT HAPPEN, SO I PREPARED A FEW DRESSES.

TRY THESE ON.

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

I'M SURE KIYOTAKA WAS JUST HAPPY TO HAVE YOU COME, SO HE DIDN'T TELL YOU,

BUT THIS IS THE KIND OF EVENT THAT CALLS FOR A BIT OF FLASH.

YOU LOOK WONDERFUL, AOI-CHAN!

I'M A DIVORCEE.

MY SON IS IN HIS FIRST YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL.

Though he's been studying abroad.

OH, YOU HAVE A SON, YOSHIE-SAN?

AS CHARMING AS MY SON IS, I WISH I'D HAD A GIRL, TOO.

WHY, THANK YOU!

Huh?!

YOU DON'T AT ALL LOOK LIKE YOU'D HAVE A CHILD THAT AGE!

SEIJI-SAN LOVES BEAUTIFUL THINGS, YOU SEE.

SO I WORK VERY HARD ON MYSELF.

I THINK THAT'S REALLY NICE.

BUT IT'S NOT THAT I'M AFRAID TO LOSE HIM...

I JUST... WANT TO BE THAT WAY, I SUPPOSE.

HE'S SO OBSESSED WITH THEM...

...THAT I ACTUALLY THOUGHT ABOUT BREAKING ONE ONCE.

BREAKING ONE?!

WELL, IT'S NO FUN BEING HIS GIRLFRIEND SOMETIMES.

BUT IT SURE CAN BE A PAIN SOMETIMES...

A PAIN?

YEAH, I CAN SEE THAT.

HE REALLY GETS TUNNEL VISION AROUND HIS ANTIQUES!

SEIJI-SAN'S LOVE OF BEAUTY!

ANTIQUES ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN SEIJI-SAN'S LIFE.

IT'S TRUE HERE IN THIS HOUSE, TOO...

THAT'S RIGHT.

BUT THAT'S PART OF WHY YOU LOVE HIM, RIGHT?

I THINK I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN!

BUT YOU JUST CAN'T SEEM TO STAY AWAY!

THE YAGASHIRA MEN ARE SO INTENSE, IN ALL THE BEST AND WORST WAYS!

YOU KNOW HOW IT IS!

HUG

I'VE TRIED TO EXPLAIN IT TO MY FRIENDS, BUT NONE OF THEM UNDER-STAND!

OH, I'M SO GLAD I GOT A CHANCE TO TALK TO YOU, AOI-CHAN!

I REALLY DO HOPE WE CAN SPEND MORE TIME TOGETHER.

LET ME VENT TO YOU EVERY NOW AND THEN, OKAY?

OKAY!

Yoshie-san's so good-looking that I assumed she'd be un-approachable, but...

She's actually a really sweet person.

Exhibition Room
展示室

MY, THERE ARE LOTS OF PRETTY LADIES HERE, I SEE.

THANK YOU, AOI-CHAN.

I HOPE YOU ENJOY YOURSELF TODAY.

THAT SUIT LOOKS AMAZING ON YOU!

OWNER!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

OWNER,

YANAGIHARA-SENSEI HAS ARRIVED.

GOOD-NESS ME...

IS THAT YOU, AOI-SAN?

THIS IS QUITE A SURPRISE.

DID YOSHIE-SAN DO YOUR MAKEUP?

OH, YES...

WELL, SEIJI-SAN AND I ARE GOING TO DO THE ROUNDS AND SAY HELLO TO THE GUESTS.

D-DOES IT LOOK STRANGE?

YA LOOK JUST LOVELY.

IT'S PERFECT.

DROPPING INTO YOUR KYOTO ACCENT IS AGAINST THE RULES!

Aoi-san?

AOI!

KAORI!

YOU LOOK JUST GREAT IN A KIMONO!

WE MADE THE KIMONO SEIJI-SAN IS GONNA WEAR LATER!

IN THE END, OUR WHOLE FAMILY WAS INVITED!

Sissy couldn't come, though...

WOW, LOOK OVER THERE! ISN'T THAT MASAMUNE?

HUH?

H-HELLO, HOLMES-SAN.

HELLO THERE, KAORI-SAN.

YOU KNOW, THOSE FAMOUS PANTOMIME GUYS!

MASATAKA AND MUNEYOSHI, THE MASAMUNE BOYS.

THEY'RE AMAZING WITH IMPRESSIONS AND MAGIC, TOO. THEY'RE SO POPULAR, THEY EVEN PERFORM OVERSEAS!

THE OWNER RUBS ELBOWS WITH PEOPLE LIKE THAT, TOO?

WOW... IT'S...!

HE'S NEVER MENTIONED IT TO ME, BUT...

MASAMUNE

peace

world tour

I DO KNOW THE MAN THAT'S STANDING WITH THEM.

HE MUST HAVE BROUGHT THEM ALONG.

I THOUGHT THEY WEREN'T SPEAKING ANYMORE, BUT...

THAT'S SHIMIZU, THE PRODUCER FOR *HEIRLOOM HUNTERS*.

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AHEM

UM... THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING TO MY FATHER'S BIRTHDAY PARTY TODAY.

WE INVITE YOU TO VIEW THEM BEFORE DINNER.

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THIS HOUSE WAS ORIGINALLY ...

...SOMETHING OF A PRIVATE MUSEUM RUN BY MY FATHER'S TEACHER, YAGASHIRA KURANOSUKE, AN ART DEALER.

AND NOW, WE HAVE SOME...

...OF THE YAGASHIRA FAMILY'S GREATEST TREASURES ON DISPLAY IN THE EXHIBITION ROOM.

CLACK

HEY, AOI-CHAN!

YOU'RE LOOKING MIGHTY GROWN-UP TODAY.

AKIHITO-SAN!

IT REALLY DOES LOOK LIKE A MUSEUM, DUNNIT?

WOW!

HE'S AN ACTOR NAMED KAJIWARA AKIHITO.

!

HE'S MEGA-HOT!

Who's that?!

THAT EXPLAINS WHY YOU WEAR THAT KIMONO SO WELL.

YOU LOOK JUST LOVELY.

AW, SHUCKS...

AKIHITO-SAN, THIS IS MY FRIEND, MIYASHITA KAORI.

HER PARENTS OWN MIYASHITA TEXTILES.

THIS IS ONE OF MY GRANDFATHER'S MOST PRIZED PIECES.

A CELADON VASE.

What is he, a ninja? When did he...

BY THE WAY, HAVE YOU TALKED TO HOLMES?

I'VE BEEN SEEING HIM AROUND, BUT I CAN'T SEEM TO SNAG HIM.

HE WAS HERE A MINUTE A— HUH?

CHINESE CELADONS ARE CONSIDERED MASTERPIECES OF THE ART FORM.

THEIR SIMPLE YET TRANSCENDENT BEAUTY AND OVERWHELMING REFINEMENT...

...ARE SAID TO BE THE EMBODIMENT OF THE FOLK AESTHETIC.

ONLY A FEW DOZEN OF THESE HAVE EVER BEEN IDENTIFIED THE WORLD OVER.

MY GRANDFATHER'S TEACHER, KURANOSUKE, FOUND THIS ONE ON THE CONTINENT.

I CAN'T BELIEVE SOMETHING SO INCREDIBLE IS JUST SITTING IN SOMEONE'S HOUSE...

THEY ARE TRULY EXTRA-ORDINARY— BOTH IN BEALITY AND VALUE,

SO I URGE YOU TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ADMIRE IT.

BET THAT THING WAS HELLA EXPENSIVE.

...

...STAND TALL OVER EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE ROOM.

BUT IT REALLY DOES...

A-AOI-SAN, MAY I HAVE A MINUTE?

OH, MANAGER!

THANKS. HERE YOU GO.

I NEED TO STEP OUT FOR A SECOND...

WHEN IT'S TIME FOR THE PARTY TO START, COULD YOU LOCK UP THE ROOM WHEN EVERYONE LEAVES?

OH, YES. CERTAINLY.

I wonder if the nerves have gotten to his stomach...

WAIT, ISN'T LOCKING UP THIS ROOM A HUGE RESPONSIBILITY?!

GASP

WOW, THAT CHANDELIER IS AMAZING!

TALK ABOUT STYLISH!

I WONDER IF IT'S AN ANTIQUE, TOO.

I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE...

YEAH, SURE IS.

TIME FOR THE FUN, HUH?

YEAH, I CAN'T WAIT.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE PARTY IS ABOUT TO BEGIN. PLEASE JOIN US IN THE BALLROOM.

CLACK

NO ONE'S LEFT INSIDE, RIGHT?

THAT SHOULD DO IT.

RATTLE RATTLE

Not long after...

...something completely outrageous would happen.

But at the time, I didn't have the slightest idea.

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CHAPTER 11
END